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BULWER-LYTTON FORTY YEARS AFTER¹

This is among the most informing and interesting biographies that have appeared in English in the last decade. In point of literary importance it will probably rank second only to the biographies of Tennyson and Gladstone. For Bulwer-Lytton was one of the most prolific and distinguished authors that England produced during the nineteenth century. Nor was he great only in the department of literature. His achievement in the field of politics was hardly less conspicuous or brilliant than in the realm of letters. He enjoyed, also, no mean reputation as an orator, being regarded among the most effective speakers in Parliament, and that, too, in the period when Macaulay, Palmerston, Disraeli, Bright, and even Gladstone used to thrill and hold that august body spellbound with their eloquence.

The present biography, in two volumes, is the fulfilment of an obligation assumed two generations ago and handed down from father to son. Bulwer-Lytton himself began the task of writing his autobiography and at his death imposed upon his son the obligation of completing the unfinished work. His son Robert Lytton, in acknowledgment of his inherited obligation, continued the biography and published the first instalment of two volumes in 1883, but a few years later died in Paris as British ambassador to France, leaving his assumed obligation unfulfilled. It remained for the grandson, the present Earl of Lytton, to gather up the threads and to complete the task left unfinished by his father and grandfather. It is therefore to the present Earl of Lytton that we are indebted for this valuable *Life of Edward Bulwer*, the first Lord Lytton, now presented to the public in two portly volumes.

The author has followed the usual plan of incorporating into his biography many letters, complete and fragmentary, which throw a flood of light upon the career and character of Bulwer-Lytton. The Earl of Lytton has not simply added to the instalment previously published by his father,—a book now out of

¹ *The Life of Edward Bulwer, First Lord Lytton*, by his grandson, the Earl of Lytton. Macmillan & Co., Limited, London. 1913.

print,—but has worked up the subject entirely anew, incorporating into the present work the part of the autobiography left in manuscript by his grandfather. This covered only the first twenty-two years of Bulwer-Lytton's life. The present biography does not attempt any criticism of Bulwer-Lytton's literary works; it simply chronicles them in their proper place and sequence and recites the circumstances incident to their composition. The underlying assumption is that the works have been too long before the public to require any criticism at this time. The result, however, is an extremely entertaining and interesting book and a valuable contribution to the ever increasing department of English biography.

The Bulwers were an old Norfolk family, having held lands there since the Norman Conquest. Edward, the third and youngest son of General William Earle Bulwer and Elizabeth Barbara Warburton Lytton, was born in London, May 25, 1803. Young Edward, the autobiography informs us, from being an object of indifference, became an object of positive dislike to his father, whose interest under the law of primogeniture was naturally centred in his eldest son William. But the father's dislike served but to intensify the mother's affection for her youngest son to whom she clung tenaciously, especially after the death of General Bulwer.

The autobiography records among the earliest recollections of young Edward a severe flogging he received at the hands of his irritable maternal grandfather for having purloined a cutlass of a young midshipman while at dinner at the grandfather's. Bulwer recites this painful incident in minute detail as conclusive evidence of his grandfather's intense dislike for him. The autobiography records another early incident how, when a mere babe in arms, Bulwer was snatched away from his nurse by an escaped maniac who held the infant up with much solemnity and when told by the awe-stricken nurse that he was the son of General Bulwer, the crazy man prophesied that the child would be greater than his father and something really remarkable. Then throwing the babe back into the nurse's arms, the poor maniac rushed off to a near-by pond and straightway drowned himself.

On the death of General Bulwer his widow with her youngest son Edward made her home at her father's, and when her father died, she and Edward moved to London and took up their residence there. She inherited among other things her father's large library, and it was among the books of this library in his London home that young "Teddy," as his mother familiarly called him, "was consumed with an insatiable desire for knowledge."

The autobiography furnishes an entertaining account of young Edward's varied experiences during his school days. His mother sent him to one preparatory school after another and subsequently to Eton, that famous school near Windsor where so many distinguished English statesmen and men of letters received their early training. At nineteen Bulwer entered Trinity College, Cambridge, whither his two older brothers had preceded him. Here he became a member of the Union Debating Society in which he received his forensic training for his subsequent career in Parliament. His first efforts in this debating school were a dismal failure, but by dint of perseverance and study he surmounted his difficulties and came to hold his own with the foremost debaters in his time. Bulwer tells us that the greatest display of eloquence he ever heard at this debating club was made by Macaulay, who spoke on the French Revolution. "Macaulay, in point of power, passion and effect, never equalled that in his best days in the House of Commons." It was Macaulay, Bulwer says, who kindled his imagination and fired him with the ambition to cultivate his gift of eloquence in the hope that he might rival Macaulay some day.

On leaving Cambridge Bulwer spent the next few years in travelling in the British Isles and on the Continent, going abroad for the first time in 1825. On his arrival upon the Continent at Boulogne, he met his friend Frederick Villiers, who had an affair of honor to settle with a British officer. Bulwer served Villiers as second in the duel and demonstrated his courage beyond any question. In Paris Bulwer found *entrée* into the circles of the best society "and was received with marked courtesy at the select *soirées* of the principal members of the Administration." While in the French metropolis he printed privately

a collection of poems under the caption *Woods and Wild-flowers* and worked at his sombre tale of *Falkland*.

Just at this point in Bulwer's early career the autobiography abruptly breaks off—either because in the next chapter he would have had to record the melancholy and bitter memories of his unhappy marriage, or because he began his autobiography, as his grandson suggests, “on the erroneous supposition that his public activities were likely to be greatly diminished, if not entirely suspended.” However, Bulwer's subsequent participation in politics and his renewed activities in literature furnish us an example, quite as exceptional as it is illustrious, of a writer's misjudging his own intellectual powers and resources. For after Bulwer's resolution to curtail his literary and political activities, as above indicated, he lived to accomplish his most important work in politics and to write the most mature and permanent productions of his creative imagination.

The decade from 1825-1835 is perhaps the most gloomy and pathetic and at the same time the most checkered in Bulwer's unhappy life. For it was during this period that he met, courted and married against his mother's wishes and protest, the beautiful, but ill-tempered young Irish lady, Miss Rosina Doyle Wheeler. After a few happy years of wedded life she proved such a shrew and Xanthippe that his domestic life became an intolerable burden and he was compelled to seek a legal separation. But even after the separation she continued to harass him by her fiendish attacks and to persecute him relentlessly till death removed him beyond the reach of her envenomed tongue.

When Bulwer first met the fascinating, but unfortunate Miss Wheeler, he immediately capitulated to her personal charms and beauty. Despite his mother's strong disapproval and opposition, he married the young Irish beauty in August, 1827, and set up his *lares* and *penates* at Woodcot House, in Oxfordshire, near Reading. Here for nearly two years the ill-matched couple lived on a modest scale in happy seclusion. Here too, she bore him a daughter, Emily, as their first hostage to fortune, and here he supported his small family by the meagre competence secured him by his father's will and supplemented by the receipts from his own facile pen. But the strain and anxiety of pecuniary em-

barrassment and the divergent temperaments of the ill-assorted pair soon began to undermine the happiness of their modest home. Nor did the hostile attitude of Bulwer's mother serve in any manner to heal the incipient breach. On the contrary, this was perhaps the rift in the lute.

Bulwer's marriage had brought about strained relations between him and his mother, and a reconciliation was not effected for many moons. During this interim the son received no aid and but scant sympathy from the mother. Meanwhile Bulwer's family had increased and their style of living was becoming more extravagant. The family expenses amounted to \$15,000 a year, and nearly the whole of this sum had to be earned by Bulwer's productive pen. He therefore had to do a great deal of literary drudgery those years to make his accounts balance.

"In the years from 1827 to 1837 Bulwer completed ten novels, two long poems, one political pamphlet, one play, the political sketches in *England and the English*, three volumes of the *History of Athens* (only two of which were ever published), and all the essays and tales collected in the *Student*." Besides all this, he was editor of the *New Monthly Magazine* and contributed anonymously to the columns of the *Edinburgh Review*, the *Westminster Review*, the *Monthly Chronicle*, the *Examiner*, the *Literary Gazette*, and other periodicals. But this is merely the record of his literary activities. In addition, he was an active member of Parliament from 1831 onwards, and the duties incident to this office must have absorbed much of his time.

Surely, then, in the midst of such a crowded and feverish public life Bulwer must have had very little time left for the cultivation of his family ties. In view of the heavy drafts on his nervous energy which his multitude of labors entailed, it is not surprising, as his wife contended, that Bulwer should have become irritable and impatient as the years passed by. The little respite he had from perpetual drudgery he was accustomed to spend in the society of those who could furnish mental stimulus or recreation. "Thus he either dined out, or invited others to his own table whose tastes and interests were most congenial to his own." He felt that his wife was not interested in his pursuits and that she was unsympathetic towards his friends.

It is not unnatural, therefore, that Bulwer and his wife drifted apart and that harsh recriminations and bitter quarrels became of all too frequent occurrence in their once happy household. The husband realized from sad experience that married life was no grand, sweet song for him; and the wife had found out as an actual fact that marriage to a man absorbed in literature and politics was a melancholy failure and a bitter disappointment to her.

In 1833 Bulwer's health failed. Partly to recover it and partly to escape from the growing evils of their unhappy domestic life, he and his wife undertook a journey to Italy through France and Switzerland, leaving their children, Emily and Robert, at home in care of their common friend Miss Greene. But, as far as recovering health and happiness was concerned, the trip proved a disappointment. Bulwer's habits of work were too deep-seated for him to throw them off with entire abandon; and so during his sojourn in Italy he occupied his attention in gathering materials for two new novels, *Rienzi* and the *Last Days of Pompeii*. Consequently his wife received but little more of his attention abroad than she was accustomed to receive at home. The crisis came in Naples, where Mrs. Bulwer "obtained consolation for her wounded feelings in the attentions of a Neapolitan Prince who bestowed upon her the praise, flattery and affection which her husband had so long denied her." On discovering the facts Bulwer flew into a violent rage and speedily hurried with his wife back to England. "Their journey home was a long protracted nightmare, a period of violent emotions, of passions in revolt, of bitter recriminations."

To make a long story short, after numerous quarrels and reconciliations, Bulwer determined upon a legal separation. He could not obtain a divorce since, according to the law of England, there were complaints and charges by each party. In April, 1836, the deed of separation was executed and signed, Bulwer agreeing to pay his wife an annual allowance of \$2,000 as alimony. But far from ending their domestic unhappiness, as was hoped, the separation only inaugurated "a new period of 'uncharitable war' which lasted to the end of their lives, and far exceeded in bitterness all that had gone before." Up to the day of the legal sepa-

ration Bulwer's literary and political activities—his public life—had overshadowed his private life, thus undermining the peace and happiness of his home. After the separation, however, his domestic life—his relations with his wife—so invaded his public life as to dwarf his literary and political triumphs, converting them into veritable apples of Sodom. For Mrs. Bulwer's remorseless persecution of her husband assumed the character of an obsession with her and so dominated her mind with the idea of revenge that the poor woman became deranged and was committed to a sanitarium as a frenzied maniac. Even after her release she pursued Bulwer with coarse and scurrilous libels and with her vitriolic abuse. Death alone brought an end to her envenomed attacks. The tragic spectre haunted Bulwer to his grave, clouded all his brilliant successes, and embittered his declining years. "Every book that he wrote," says his grandson, "every play that he produced, every time that he appeared at a public meeting, every new honor which he received, provided her [his wife] with fresh occasions to remind him of the poison which could never be eradicated from his life."

It was a common practice of Bulwer to publish anonymously, and hence many of the productions of his genius appeared unsigned. Perhaps his reason was, in part at least, to escape the notice of his waspish wife. Perhaps another reason was that he desired thus to avoid inviting the poignant criticism of any who might have sympathized with his wife in their long-drawn-out and mortifying controversy.

Among Bulwer's earlier works of importance was the novel *Pelham*, begun in 1825 and finished in 1828, but kept for some time in his portfolio. With the publication of this book he leapt at once into fame. A few months after its appearance this novel was translated into French, Spanish, Italian, and German. *Pelham* was regarded as a text-book upon English society and was discussed in the salons throughout all Europe. It is worth noting that a curious result in society is attributed to the influence of this novel. "Till then the coats worn for evening dress," observes the Earl of Lytton, "had been of many colors—brown, green, or blue, according to the fancy of the wearer. These were eventually discarded for the black coat, and it is

said that the change was brought about by Lady Frances Pelham, who was made to say in a letter to her son:—

Apropos of the complexion; I did not like that blue coat you wore when I saw you last. You look best in black, which is a great compliment, for people must be very distinguished in appearance to do so.

The *Disowned*, *Devereux*, and *Paul Clifford* followed *Pelham* in quick succession. A contemporary critic reviewing these novels in *The Examiner* ventured his opinion that “Mr. Bulwer had written *Pelham* for his own pleasure, the *Disowned* for his book-seller and *Devereux* for the support of his fame with the public.” The Earl of Lytton revising this verdict in the light of history notes that his grandfather had written *Devereux* for the support of his wife and child, for while *Pelham* had brought him \$2,500 and the *Disowned* had netted him \$4,000, he received from his publisher \$75,000 for the copyright of *Devereux*.

Paul Clifford, published in 1830, was a new departure for Bulwer. It represents the type of novel the Germans call *Tendenzstücke*, and we, the purpose novel, then something new in fiction. In the words of its author the ostensible purpose of the book is “to draw attention to two errors in the English penal institutions, viz.:—a vicious prison discipline and a sanguinary penal code.” At the time of the publication of this book, horse-stealing, sheep-stealing, cattle-stealing, and even letter-stealing were offences punishable by death, according to the English code. The influence of *Paul Clifford* stimulated and helped to crystallize public sentiment in favor of criminal law reform. It was for this purpose that the book was written, and it was accepted as a vigorous protest against the conditions then existing in British prisons. The result was the Reform Bill of 1835, which was destined to correct the abuses in English penal institutions, then described in the report of a special committee of Parliament “as places where old offenders were confirmed in iniquity and young ones trained up to it.”

As editor of *The New Monthly* and other journals Bulwer had an opportunity of making the acquaintance of the foremost *littérateurs* of that period. Some of those acquaintances, such as Disraeli, John Forster, and Lady Blessington, came to be life-long

friends. During Bulwer's connection with *The New Monthly* he wrote and published the three novels, *Eugene Aram*, *Godolphin*, and *Pilgrims of the Rhine*, and his collection of sketches, *England and the English*. Of these, *Eugene Aram* elicited a storm of criticism for no other reason than that it dealt with crime, "which was considered a subject unfit for elevated fiction." Who would now think of criticising Shakespeare for the theme of *Macbeth*, or *Othello*, or the *Richards*? So far have the canons of literary taste changed since the early days of Bulwer, who was sharply criticised for following the precedent set by Shakespeare.

It is time now to consider another aspect of Bulwer's genius—his political interests. In 1831, when Bulwer entered Parliament, political conditions were in such a state that he felt constrained, aristocrat though he was, to identify himself with the radical and progressive party, the Whigs. The principles the Whigs stood for, such as the various reform measures, made a very strong appeal to Bulwer and enlisted his sympathy and interest. All over Great Britain there was general discontent with existing conditions; and reform unions and associations were springing up everywhere. The Liberal press, too, threw the weight of its mighty influence on the side of the people and helped to foment the growing discontent with the Wellington Government. Indeed, the trouble reached such an acute stage that mobs actually smashed the windows of the house of the Iron Duke, showing very much the same attitude to his reactionary and Bourbon Government as the militant suffragettes recently manifested toward the Asquith Government. Reform was the universal slogan of the people, and the wildest sorts of fancies were entertained as to the advantages that were confidently expected from the reform measures.

Lord John Russell introduced his famous Reform Bill in Parliament in 1831, but it was defeated. The result was that Parliament was dissolved and an appeal made to the people. In the general election which followed, the constituencies, rural as well as urban, declared overwhelmingly for the Reform Bill. In this tidal wave of reform which swept over the country Bulwer landed in the House of Commons as the representative of St.

Ives. Delighted at his election, he indited this brief note to his mother, under date of April 30, 1831:—

My dearest Mother—I write to you forthwith. I am returned to Parliament this day and hour. Post waits. This is my first frank. Yours most affectionately, E. L. B.

On taking his seat in the House of Commons Bulwer of course aligned himself on the side of the Reformers. Lord John Russell again introduced his Reform Bill when Parliament assembled, and on the second night of the debate Bulwer made his maiden speech in behalf of the bill. The bill passed the House of Commons by a large majority, but was defeated in the House of Lords. The overwhelming popular demand for the bill being recognized, at the earnest solicitation of Lord Grey, King William IV created such a number of Peers as to insure the passage of the bill, and the Reform Bill became law June 7, 1832. The constituency of St. Ives was one of those swept away by the Reform Bill, but Bulwer was not deprived of his seat, for on the invitation of Lincoln he had the honor to represent that constituency in the next Parliament. Bulwer then exerted his energies in Parliament to promoting the reform of the Factory Laws, the Poor Laws, the removal of Jewish disabilities, and the establishment of a dramatic copyright which enabled authors to retain property in their own works. This last measure ultimately led to international copyright. Bulwer also labored to have the stamp duty on newspapers removed—"a tax on knowledge," as it was denominated, which proved an oppressive burden to the daily press.

In his *England and the English* Bulwer thus gives expression to his sentiments on the functions of government; and it appears that these principles were his guiding star in his legislative activities:—

In a well-ordered constitution, a constitution in harmony with its subjects, each citizen confounds himself with the State; he is proud that he belongs to it; the genius of the whole people enters into his soul; he is not one man only, he is inspired by the mighty force of the community; he feels the dignity of the nation in himself, he beholds himself in the dignity of the nation. To unite, then, the people and

the Government, to prevent that jealousy and antagonism of power which we behold at present, each resisting each to their common weakness; to merge, in a word, both names in the name State, we must first advance the popular principle to satisfy the people, and then prevent a conceding government by creating a directive one.

At present, my friends, you only perceive the Government when it knocks at your doors for taxes; you couple with its name the idea not of protection, but of extortion; but I would wish that you should see the Government educating your children, encouraging your science, and ameliorating the condition of your poor. I wish you to warm while you utter its very name, with a grateful and reverent sense of enlightenment and protection. . . . I wish you to feel advancing towards that unceasing and incalculable amelioration which I firmly believe to be the common destiny of mankind, with a steady march and beneath a beloved banner. I wish that every act of beneficent Reform should seem to you neither conceded, nor extorted, but as a pledge of a sacred and mutual love; the legitimate offspring of one faithful and indissoluble union between the power of a people and the majesty of a State.

This is what I mean by a *directive* Government; and a Government so formed is always strong, not for evil, but for good. . . .

From my boyhood to this hour, it is to the condition of the great masses of men that my interest and my studies have been directed; it is for their amelioration and enlightenment that I have been a labourer and an enthusiast. Yes, I say enthusiast! for when a man is sincere, enthusiasm warms him; when useful, enthusiasm directs. . . .

As we have already observed, the strain of his combined activities in politics and literature undermined Bulwer's health, compelling him to undertake a journey to Italy to recuperate. On this journey, as previously stated, he collected the material for his two historic novels dealing with Roman life. The *genius loci*, while Bulwer visited the romantic ruins and roamed through the streets of that long-buried city of Pompeii, completely mastered him and fired his imagination. Shortly after his return to his native land Bulwer published his *Last Days of Pompeii* in the autumn of 1834. It is an interesting circumstance, as the Earl of Lytton reminds us, that though this book

was written at a time of great domestic trouble and consequent mental depression, there is not the slightest evidence of this fact in the novel itself; on the contrary, there is a marked gaiety of tone pervading the entire book.

In 1835 Bulwer published an able political pamphlet setting forth the condition of affairs from the operation of the Reform Bill and written in support of the Radicals or Whigs. Therefore, when the Melbourne Government was organized, in recognition of the service rendered the Whig party by this pamphlet, Bulwer was offered a minor post by Lord Melbourne in his Cabinet. The decision involved a crisis in Bulwer's career, because he realized that he was at the parting of the ways. Like Disraeli, Bulwer had begun to write as means of securing for himself an introduction into the world of politics. Yet when a special opportunity was offered him, as in this case, of realizing his ambition, he decided to decline the offer, preferring to continue his double career in letters and politics, rather than to abandon those literary pursuits in which his talents had hitherto found their chief employment. If he had accepted the post, he felt that he would have had to give up his literary activities probably for life—a price which he was not willing to pay for political preferment. Bulwer thus made a decisive choice for literature in declining the government post. His interest in politics, however, did not cease, and he even accepted a cabinet position some years later. Still his declination of the place in the Melbourne Government was then especially significant as showing the supreme bent of Bulwer's dual genius; for, as his biographer records, "it is on his achievements as a writer and not as a politician that his fame rests."

The next chapter of Bulwer's life deals with his rôle as a dramatist. After the publication of his historical novel *Rienzi*, which enjoyed the largest sale of all of his works during the author's lifetime, Bulwer decided to make his début as a dramatic author as the result of his association and friendship with the noted actor Macready. The first heir of Bulwer's dramatic invention was the unsuccessful play of *Cromwell*, produced in 1836. The next year he wrote *The Duchess de la Vallière*. This play enjoyed a promising first night, but somewhat later

encountered an untimely frost and had to be withdrawn. Undeterred by these two failures, Bulwer set resolutely to work again and produced *The Adventurer*, the title of which he changed to *The Lady of Lyons* out of deference to a suggestion from his friend Macready. This play proved a conspicuous success and is even yet occasionally presented upon the stage, though its sentiment is regarded as rather antiquated now. Apropos of the author's interest in the performance of this play the following anecdote is told by the Earl of Lytton:—

The night when *The Lady of Lyons* was first produced, Bulwer was detained in the House of Commons, where he had made a speech in support of Mr. Grote's Bill for the Establishment of the Ballot at elections. At the conclusion of his speech he left the House and hurried to Covent Garden to learn the result of the performance. On the way he met Sergeant Talfourd, a fellow member and fellow author, whose play *Ion* had been produced in 1836. Talfourd was himself returning from Covent Garden, and was eagerly questioned about the new play by Bulwer, whom he little suspected of being its author. "Oh, it went very well indeed—for that sort of thing," was the reply. Bulwer arrived at the theatre just in time to see the last act, at the conclusion of which the curtain fell amidst the enthusiastic applause of the audience. To the loud cries of "Author" no reply was forthcoming. Everyone began discussing the play and its unknown author. "What do you think of it?" said Lady Blessington to Bulwer. "Oh, very good—for that sort of thing," he replied. Lady Blessington was shocked and said, "That is the first time I have seen you jealous."

Bulwer's method of composition was surprisingly rapid. He spent only two weeks in writing *The Lady of Lyons*. He spent about the same time upon his next dramatic venture, *Richelieu*. But the first draft of each play was carefully revised, and in the revision received valuable help from Macready, for whom both plays were written. In regard to *Richelieu* Macready writes:—

Called on Bulwer and talked over the play of *Richelieu*. He combated my objections and acceded to them as his judgment swayed him; but when I developed the object of the whole plan of alterations he was in ecstasies. I never

saw him so excited, several times exclaiming that he was "enchanted" with the plan, and observed in high spirits "What a fellow you are!" I left him the play and he promised to let me have it in a week! He is a wonderful man.

After *Richelieu* came *The Sea-Captain*, which called forth Thackeray's bitter attack in the *Yellowplush Papers*. The adverse criticism of this play by Thackeray and others caused Bulwer to recast it, and he subsequently published it under the title of *The Rightful Heir*.

In the three plays, *The Duchess de la Vallière*, *The Lady of Lyons*, and *Richelieu*, Bulwer attempted to reproduce and illustrate perhaps the three most interesting and remarkable periods in French history. These plays may be regarded as constituting a dramatic series. After this Bulwer made a new departure and produced in 1840 a comedy, *Money*, and with the production of this play his "career as a successful dramatist came to an end." Writing to Bulwer concerning this last-named play, Dickens says:—

Let me thank you for the copy of your comedy received this morning. I told Macready when he read it to me a few weeks since that I could not call to mind any play since *The Good-Natured Man*, so full of real, distinct, genuine character; and now that I am better acquainted with it, I am only the more strongly confirmed in this honest opinion.

During the eleven years (1841-1852) that Bulwer was out of Parliament he was engaged almost entirely in his literary pursuits, except when he was endeavoring to recover his health, which at intervals was quite precarious. In 1842 he produced his most romantic and imaginative work—*Zanoni*—and six years later his poem *King Arthur*. These two productions he considered his masterpieces in prose and verse respectively. During the interim between the appearance of *Zanoni* and *King Arthur* Bulwer published the two historical romances, *The Last of the Barons* and *Harold*. In 1849 he began to work a new vein, and the result was *The Caxtons* and *My Novel*, regarded by many critics as the best of all his works. Bulwer was a good German

scholar and an ardent admirer of Schiller, whom he ranked even above Goethe. His interest in Schiller induced him to undertake a translation of Schiller's *Poems and Ballads*, completed in 1844. About a year afterward Bulwer wrote a long poem entitled *The New Timon*, which he published anonymously in four parts. It was in this poem that he made some satiric reference to Tennyson, dubbing him "school-miss Alfred," as follows:—

No tawdry grace shall womanize my pen!
 Even in love-song man should write for men!
 Not mine, not mine (O Muse forbid) the boon
 Of borrowed notes, the mock-bird's modish tune,
 The jingling medley of purloin'd conceits,
 Outbabying Wordsworth, and outglittering Keats,
 Where all the airs of patchwork-pastoral chime
 To drowsy ears in Tennysonian rhyme!

This attack called forth a satiric rejoinder from Tennyson, *The New Timon and the Poets*, which appeared in *Punch* (February 28, 1846), but which the author would never allow to be reprinted among his works. Tennyson himself said of these lines, "They were too bitter. I do not think I should ever have published them."

In 1848 Bulwer had a dark shadow come over his tragic life in the death of his only daughter Emily. After the separation between the father and mother in 1836, Emily and her brother Robert had hardly known the meaning of the word home. It is true that Miss Greene, to whom the children were entrusted, did what she could for them, but their lives must have been very lonely and unhappy under the circumstances. Emily was sent to school in Germany and afterwards in England, and she and her brother spent only their holidays with their father at Knebworth. To add to the burden of Bulwer's grief over the untimely death of his daughter, Mrs. Bulwer chose this sad occasion to vent her spleen anew upon her husband, thus reviving the miserable controversy that had embittered the lives of the unfortunate children as well as of the parents. In order to distract his mind from his private sorrow, Bulwer, like Cicero under similar circumstances, addressed himself to his literary labors with absorbing interest, working arduously at those most mature productions of his genius, *The Caxtons* and *My Novel*. Curiously

enough, these novels furnish no evidence of the gloom and sorrow that must have hung like a pall over their author's heart at the time they were written.

In 1852 Bulwer was returned to Parliament, after an absence of eleven years. Meanwhile he had changed his politics. He had left Parliament a Whig in 1841; he returned a Tory in 1852. There were probably several reasons why Bulwer broke with the Whigs with whom he had affiliated before. During the interim he was out of Parliament he had inherited his mother's property upon her death, thus becoming the owner of the landed estate Knebworth. But what was a far more compelling motive in his political conversion, Bulwer could not endure the narrow doctrinaire principles of the Cobdenites. "The whole of their political creed was, in fact, summed up in the immortal Sam Weller's definition of free competition as 'Each for himself and God for us all,' as the donkey said when he danced among the chickens." Now these doctrines, which were anathema to Bulwer-Lytton, had come to be accepted with sanctity by the entire Liberal party—which fact "convinced him that he could no longer keep company with such a party," and therefore he broke with it. "After all," he once declared in a letter to his friend Disraeli, "I am a Protectionist." It was Disraeli's political opinions that afforded Bulwer-Lytton the bridge he needed to cross over from the Liberal to the Conservative party. For being opposed to the repeal of the Corn Laws and to the Whig doctrine of Free-Trade in general, and sympathizing with Disraeli and the Protectionists in their attacks upon Peel, Bulwer felt forced by the logic of the situation that confronted him to support the Tory democracy created by Disraeli as a convenient national policy. Bulwer-Lytton therefore returned to Parliament as a Conservative and represented the constituency of Hertfordshire in that capacity from 1852 to 1866. During this long term in the House of Commons he took an active part in the debates on the various political questions of the day, such as the Crimean War, the Chinese War, and other important issues, and greatly increased his parliamentary reputation.

In 1858 Bulwer-Lytton was offered the portfolio of Secretary for the Colonies in Lord Derby's Government and accepted.

He held this office in the Cabinet only one year, but even in so brief a while he impressed the stamp of his executive ability upon the two important provinces of Canada and Australia. The most distinguishing act of his administration, and perhaps the act of greatest permanency, was the incorporation of British Colombia as a new colony on the North American continent. But the duties of this cabinet post were not congenial to the professional man of letters, and he was glad to surrender the office with its exacting burdens and responsibilities after his one-year tenure. He appears to have regarded it merely as an incident in his literary career. Probably the renewed attacks of his wife, Lady Lytton, were also a factor in his determination to resign the office. She did all in her power to embarrass and mortify him in his public life. She even addressed letters to her husband, "the envelopes of which were covered with scurrilous and obscene inscriptions, and she sometimes dispatched as many as twenty of these in one day, all duplicates and addressed to the House of Commons, to his clubs, to town and country addresses, to hotels—anywhere, in fact, where they were likely to be seen by others." She went so far in the outburst of her passionate resentment as to post such scandalous documents to all his prominent friends—Lord Lyndhurst, Sir Francis Doyle, Dickens, Forster, Disraeli and others. In this domestic crisis Robert Lytton offered his services as mediator between father and mother, but no reconciliation could be effected; and so Bulwer-Lytton had to reap his harvest of bitterness.

Lord Derby's Government was defeated on the question of Parliamentary Reform and a great change took place in the political life of England. The day following the defeat of the Government, when the Cabinet had decided to dissolve Parliament, Bulwer-Lytton wrote the following note to his acting private secretary, Sir Henry Drummond Wolff:—

Downing Street, April 1, 1859. Remember my words. From this day dates a change that in a few years will alter the whole face of England. From this day the extreme Liberals are united; the great towns will be banded for Democracy, and Democracy in England is as sure as that

we are in this room. Nothing like this day since Charles I did much the same as we are doing.

This truly spelt the termination of aristocratic government, as Bulwer-Lytton foresaw from the result of the general election of 1859. Since he himself belonged essentially to an aristocratic age, he knew well enough that the rise of democracy with its subsequent triumphant advance marked the end of his political career. The signs of the times pointed with unquestionable accuracy to Gladstone as the coming man who was to be the peerless leader of democracy. Bulwer, however, did not retire from public life. He still retained his seat in Parliament and even delivered some of his most telling speeches on the subject of parliamentary reform. But he was not in full accord with the underlying principles of democratic government. Therefore it was only a few years till he was elevated to the peerage through Lord Derby's influence, and in 1866 took his seat in the House of Lords. Says his biographer in this connection:—

At the time when he accepted the peerage, Bulwer-Lytton hoped that with a seat in Parliament secured to him without the expense and trouble of a contested election, he would be able to render valuable service to his party by occasional speeches in the House of Lords; and with the object of rendering himself more competent for such a task, he consulted a celebrated aurist in Paris about his deafness. This man seems to have helped him considerably. . . . Whether it was that this improvement in his hearing was only temporary, and that his deafness proved an insuperable difficulty, or whether he failed to overcome the nervousness occasioned by the chilling atmosphere of the House of Lords, Lord Lytton never spoke in that assembly. He prepared speeches on several occasions during the last years of his life, but none of them was ever delivered, and his active political career was closed in 1866.

If Bulwer-Lytton's active political career was closed when he became Lord Lytton, certainly his literary activity did not cease. Throughout his entire life he was a constant reader. His historical novels imposed upon him a vast amount of research and investigation. He always occupied his leisure hours (if he may be said to have had any) in some course of serious

reading. This was his method of keeping his mind supplied with fresh ideas, or, as he put it, of "taking in coals." "With the great classical writers in Latin, Greek, German, French, Italian, and English he had an intimate acquaintance and for most of them an unstinted admiration." But he was not content simply to spend his time in reading during his declining years after he was elevated to the peerage. He was still productive and his pen was never idle.

Already before his retirement from Parliament Bulwer-Lytton had written *A Strange Story* for Dickens's magazine *All the Year Round*, which, however, did not meet with a flattering reception. In 1866 he published a volume of poetry—*The Lost Tales of Miletus*—and about the same time began his novel *Pausanias, the Spartan*. He also undertook a rhymed comedy on the subject of *Walpole*, but this did not come up to the level of his former achievements in the dramatic line. Still he persevered at it and finished it at Torquay, whither he had gone for his ill-health in the winter of 1868-69. In this same year he published his excellent metrical translation of Horace. He then projected "a fantastic story of an imaginary race living in the interior of the earth with a very highly developed civilization." This story was published under the title of *The Coming Race*, in 1871. *Pausanias* seems to have hung fire in composition and was not published till after its author's death. The same is true of two other works—*The Parisians* and *Kenelm Chillingly*. But the first of these was far enough advanced in composition to be printed as a serial in *Blackwood's Magazine*, and the last was left in manuscript at its author's death. This was the last sheaf from a bountiful harvest.

In his latter years Lord Lytton was accustomed to spend his winters at Torquay for the sake of his health. So it was here that he died January 18, 1873, shortly after a visit from his son Robert. In recognition of the prominent place Lord Lytton had occupied in the public life of his generation, he was accorded the honor of a public funeral in Westminster Abbey, and it is in that famous British Walhalla that he now sleeps "after life's fitful fever."

Despite the fact that Bulwer-Lytton occupied so prominent a place in English politics and letters and had an intimate acquaintance with the leading men of his generation in these two departments, he yet led a very lonely life. His most intimate literary friend was John Forster and his best political friend was Disraeli. Though he lived on his fine estate Knebworth, he had no home life on account of his unhappy marriage. But few men have ever lived a more laborious or strenuous life in point of mental activity. Moreover, in the allotted span of three score years and ten, few men have achieved more in the realm of literature and politics than Bulwer-Lytton. His life was spent in an atmosphere of conflict and struggle. He was assailed in his public as well as in his private life by hostile criticism. He had to sustain the attacks of literary as well as of political critics. He also had to combat constant ill-health. Yet, in spite of all opposition, he worked on "with courage and persistency to the goal of his ambition."

Though Bulwer-Lytton is a distinguished name in two separate and distinct fields, yet it is as a man of letters rather than as a statesman that he made his greatest and most enduring contribution to English civilization, and it is thus that his name will survive. He possessed a prolific genius and a facile pen. As might be expected in one of his mental equipment, his productions exhibit some rather glaring faults of style which the critics were quick to point out and mark for attack. For this reason he has perhaps never been in favor with the critical few who are looking only for flaws. But he has never lost his popularity with the general reading public. His novels are known in almost every land and have enjoyed the distinction of being translated into various tongues. His plays stood the test of the stage in their author's lifetime and some of them are even to-day presented upon the boards with flattering success. Such is Bulwer-Lytton's record of achievement in English literature.

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